THE 3G iPhone: Three Stand-out New Features

The 3G iPhone, set to be launched on 11 July, has many new features, of which three stand out as being useful for business.

iPhone in Enterprise supports Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync, and delivers email, calendar and contacts. It also gives mobile users secure access to corporate resources with Cisco IPsec VPN and wireless network services with WPA2 Enterprise and 802.1X authentication.

Local search has utilised open development standards offered with the earlier release of the iPhone’s SDK, and these applications have been given a home in the iPhone’s new App Store.

GPS capability will complement the iPhone’s existing location awareness that utilises Wi-Fi and cell tower triangulation to fix on a location and deliver local search results accordingly. Though GPS is more accurate (down to the metre level), it drops off in urban areas and indoors, where Wi-Fi positioning shines. Having both will allow the 3G iPhone to switch back and forth according to circumstances.

Each of these products helps position social media as a major tool for business. The combination of all three will provide immediate feedback in many situations, such as letting you see who’s around you, and how they might relate to you in any way, such as via LinkedIn, or Facebook.

Automated voice search applications are also being developed for the 3G iPhone, closely following the voice search model that has proved effective in longstanding mobile local search services, such as directory assistance. This could introduce entirely new ways to think about mobile, and a whole new batch of mobile products built to them. Early adopters are sure to push the capabilities of the new technology in innovative directions. Arguably, mobile will prove a closer relative to local search than online search.

(Acknowledgements to Michael Boland of Search Engine Watch, and the Australian apple.com website.)

THE FUTURE FOR BLOGS

In the past, a web user’s comments were trapped on the site or blog where they posted them. Now, services are allowing commenters to establish their own identity and reputation and to aggregate in one place the remarks they make all over the web.

These services include coComment, Co.mments, Commentful, Disgus, Intense Debate, MyBlogLog, Seesmic and SezWho, which enable users to create profiles, earn ratings for their comments and track their contributions and those of friends across the internet.

Using a ‘plug-in’ installed in the browser that captures any comments added to blogs and forums, members of these services are presented with a list of all the conversations they are involved in and can track the progress of the discussions.

Matt Colebourne, Chief Executive of coComment, sees this development as a further democratisation of the web, and says some users have 400–500 followers of their opinions through coComment. The related discussions can generate more interest than the source of their comments.

While coComment brings together disparate commenters, services such as FriendFeed works by fragmenting the discussion and creating conversations about the same thing among many different groups of people.

FriendFeed aggregates a person’s social networking activity across the web into a ‘lifestream’ of events. This
allows anyone to add comments to something the person has bookmarked, a photo he or she may have posted or a news article to which they have linked. Many people may link to the same article, triggering separate conversations about it.

Seesmic, founded last year, allows people to make video comments on blogs. Users record their thoughts on their webcams and can upload them instantly to Seesmic and the blog site. As well as making the process of commenting even easier, the site allows users to experiment with a new medium for comment.

Disqus has about 150,000 commenters, integrated into 17,000 blogs. Many bloggers are dedicating more time to commenting themselves.

Other users of the networks include public relations firms tracking discussions about their clients and marketing experts investigating consumer opinions and the most talked-about brands.

(Acknowledgments to Chris Nuttall, The Financial Times, 10 June 2008.)

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